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Ethiopia

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Notice: Adoption Processing at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa

The Federal First Instance Court of Ethiopia has announced that as of May 9, 2010, adoptive parents must appear at the federal court hearing for their adoptive child in order for the adoption to be approved. This new requirement will affect all pending and new adoption cases that have not yet been presented to the court. If there are two adoptive parents but only one parent can attend the hearing, the attending parent must have a power of attorney from the other. However, please note that if only one parent meets the adoptive child before the court date, the child will qualify for an IR-4, not an IR-3 visa (which means that the child will not become a U.S. citizen upon entry to the United States).

In addition, the Government of Ethiopia recently announced that they have revoked the licenses of nine orphanages in different regions of the country. Those orphanages are:

- Adera child orphanage
- Agar Lewegen orphanage
- Almaz orphanage
- Biruh Zemen orphanage
- Bitania orphanage
- Help for the Needy orphanage
- Holy Savior orphanage
- Kunket orphanage
- Tsega orphanage

The Government has informed the Embassy that all children in those orphanages have been moved to accredited orphanages, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs has stated that those children should still be available to be matched for international adoption. Prospective adoptive parents should contact their agency or the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) if they wish to confirm that the child with whom they were already matched is still available for adoption. When contacting MOWA, be sure to include the name of the child, the orphanage name and the adoption agency's name.

Adoptive parents should be aware that in all adoption visa cases worldwide, an I-604 (Determination on Child for Adoption, sometimes referred to as "orphan investigation") must be completed in connection with every I-600 application. Depending on the circumstances of the case, this investigation may take up to several weeks or even months to complete. Therefore, adoptive parents should not plan to travel to Ethiopia until they have confirmed with their adoption agency that their visa interview appointment has been confirmed. Adoptive parents should be aware that at any point that a consular officer encounters information that indicates that a child's history may be different than documented, the consular officer is obligated to investigate the case further until it can be confirmed that the child meets the definition of "orphan" under U.S. immigration law.

The Embassy's Adoptions Unit can be reached at adoptionsaddis@state.gov.

Please continue to monitor <http://adoption.state.gov/> for updated information as it becomes available.